

TRACK THROUGH WATER STREET

Vigorously Opposed by Norwich Common Council Committee at Legislative Hearing—Trolley Company Manager Objects to Alternate Route Which He Claims Would be Devious and Dangerous.

The Connecticut company asked for authority to extend its tracks in Norwich from a connection with the company's track in Main street, at Washington square, through Water street and Market street to a connection with its track in Main street, and the matter was given a third hearing before the committee on railroads Wednesday afternoon at the state capitol. Corporation Counsel Joseph T. Fanning stated that when the matter was before the committee the committee was unable to tell whether it was the purpose of the company to use the proposed track in Water street in the regular everyday business or merely for storage and emergency occasions. One-Way Movement.

Mr. Punderford said it was unfortunate that the committee was disappointed at the former hearing, but he had a pressing call to Boston, but had sent a letter of explanation that was evidently delayed in transmission. He said the company was not going to the expense of building tracks for storage purposes, but the plan was for a one-way movement of the cars, going west and south by Main street and returning by the proposed new route in Water street. He said the company had no objection to going over a route through Little Water and Shetucket streets, but preferred that the petition should cover both routes, in the event of difficulty in construction of the Little Water street route. An alternate route was wanted in case there was trouble with officials of the city of Norwich.

Falls Avenue Route Suggested. Mr. Fanning said the proposed extension was first brought to the attention of the people of Norwich through a newspaper news item. True, there was an advertisement of the company's intention in a New London newspaper, but Norwich people did not look for Norwich information from that source. It may be that objection would be lessened by the Little Water street route, but there was still opposition against tracks in Market street through Falls avenue, and the stream road track to Shetucket street to the present tracks of the company, and if the extension were for the purpose of meeting excessive traffic there would be insistence to the limit that the cars be sent over the steam road tracks. He said Mr. Punderford had not yet told the committee whether the proposed tracks in Water street were to be used regularly in the everyday business.

Mr. Punderford said it was the intention to use the proposed tracks in the one-way movement plan, that is, to have the cars in a direction opposite to the cars in Main street.

Mr. Fanning said that it had been disclosed that there was not room in Water street for the tracks.

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congested already. He said that ever since he was a boy, and long before, Market street was a sort of market place for farmers, and that there was no reason for discontinuance. The wholesalers needed all available space in connection with their business, and he presented a petition of the business firms in Water street against tracks being laid in that busy thoroughfare. He said the present tracks were adequate for the trolley service and cited instances in other cities where cars were run on five minute schedule in streets not so wide as Main street and on a single track.

Water Street Firms Against It. Mayor Murphy said he did not want it to appear that he was opposing the trolley people, for he was in favor of an improvement in the service if it was for the public convenience and not inconvenience. The petition of the Water street business men had been presented to the court of common council and the mayor and Councilmen Kramer and Williams were appointed a committee to oppose the laying of tracks in that street. He said the trolley company had property sufficient to meet all requirements. There was no necessity for using Water street at the present time. He said it would not be fair to the people of Norwich to report in favor of the trolley business. There is no evidence of material increase in the trolley business. The city has expended about \$30,000 to improve Little Water street and it should not be given over to unnecessary trolley service. He offered the route by the steam road track, which is within 15 feet of the present trolley tracks.

Mr. Punderford's Argument. Mr. Punderford said the proposed route was needed in order to give a 15 minute schedule on the Norwich New London route, and under the present conditions there was trouble in running the cars. The route proposed by the mayor was too devious and dangerous. Mr. Punderford said an ordinance would regulate conditions in Water street, which is evidently a hucksters' station, and that most of the congestion is caused by permitting boxes on the sidewalks. He said the proposed extension would give the company no territory, but that the one-way movement of cars would be for the public benefit and convenience. Mr. Murphy replied that the merchants in Water street were not permitted to do business and he was glad to see the hustle and bustle in that busy street. He was pleased that there were packing cases and boxes there and that there was business to warrant it. He said it was not for Mr. Punderford to tell the committee such stuff, but he knew it would have no effect upon their intelligence. He could not see what reason why the trolley company should not utilize their own property and not attempt to hamper the business in Water street.

Mr. Fanning said the petition presented to the Norwich city council, which had been handed to the committee by the mayor, was signed by all the property owners of Water street. He denied that Water street was used for hucksters' purposes, for hawkers or by peddlers. There was no condition that required tracks in that street now that did not exist five or six years ago. When the widening of Water street was contemplated the Connecticut company was asked to operate and bear a part of the expense, as it was reported that the company wanted to track the street. Mr. Punderford was communicated with and said that the company did not want to use the street and therefore would not share the expense. Then the city went forward and did the work. Now that the city has expended \$30,000 the company comes and asks permission to lay tracks there. The people of Norwich were opposed and he hoped the committee would favorably consider the opposition.

Objections in Market Street. Senator Peck of the committee asked what the objection was to tracks in Market street.

Mr. Fanning replied that the city had expended a large sum on improvements, that there was a steep grade, a sharp turn, and could not be used by trolley cars without great public danger. There was a 5 to 10 per cent grade in Market street and a 5 per cent grade in Water street. Mr. Punderford said the cars were being operated with safety on 9 and 14 per cent grades. He said the company did not unite with the city in widening Water street several years ago as the company did not consider the company needed any part of the street. He said what the company asked for is reasonable, especially as the city suggested the same route asked for about six years ago, before the improvement was made. He said the proposed plan was under consideration a year and a half ago.

Mr. Fanning asked why it was not made known, and Mr. Punderford replied: "We didn't have to; the need then was not so urgent as now."

Mayor Murphy said by reason of danger Norwich protested with vigor against trolley tracks in Market street. Mr. Fanning suggested that the committee visit the premises and be believed the visit would be worth the cost to the city of Norwich. Mr. Punderford said he would be glad to split the cost. Senator Landers of the committee said the committee was ready to pay the expenses if such a visit was deemed necessary. Senator Kramer asked why the legitimate expenses of the committee, Councilman Kramer asked why the trolley road route could not be used to advantage. Mr. Punderford said it was dangerous and devious and he did not know what there might be in the future to interfere and therefore he did not care to mix the matter. Mr. Kramer then told of the heavy teamsters and generally congested condition of Water street and the detriment to business if trolley cars were permitted in that street.

The hearing was then declared closed.

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